

**KNOWLEDGE AND COGNITION**

**TRANSLATION OF MAULANA *ALLAH* YAR  
KHAN'S BOOK**

**'ILM-o 'IFRAN**

**BY ABU TALHA**

## INTRODUCTION

Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, remained the seat of learning for a long time. Though now strife-torn after the ouster of the Marxist regime, it has seen the blossoming of Islamic sciences. Even today the Jihad (fighting in the cause of **ALLAH** as distinct from war) is being led by Muslim scholars turned warriors. A scholar from Kabul wrote to his eminence **ALLAH** Yar Khan RAH, asking certain questions about *Tasawwuf* (Islamic mysticism). This has been their practice to seek guidance in such matters from saints of eminence. The historic meeting of Maulana Rumi and his Shaikh Shams Tabrez is well known to any student of Sufi thought.

A scholar feels an unslakable thirst as he advances in the quest of knowledge. The skepticism generated by knowledge without insight needs to be removed. It is for the same reason that he addresses a saint blessed with spiritual enlightenment. He knows that the fountain to satiate his thirst will be found here. The following letter provides an example of such an effort.

Translator

## Text of the Letter

I had the chance to go through your book *Dalael-us-Sulook*, given by a friend, Dilawar Khan. The book lighted up the dark corners of my heart and strengthened my faith. I was surprised to find that our sub continent had been blessed with such a glittering jewel at a time when we are groping in the darkness of secularism. I would never have believed had I not personally seen your book. If someone had described these facts to me, I would have doubted him. Although whatever you have written has the full support of the Quran and the Sunnah and you appear to combine in yourself the best of Shariah and the Tariqah, yet it is a rare thing in the present age.

For a long time, I had been in search of someone who could cure my heart of all spiritual ailments but all my efforts were in vain. The so called spiritual guides that I met proved to be more of businessmen and as such I could not achieve my cherished goal. If I could come over to meet you I shall be very fortunate because I am at the tail end of my life. Meanwhile, I am eager to seek certain clarifications and I hope you will be kind enough to oblige.

### **Question 1**

Does one find similar Sufi practices and twice a day gathering for Zikr, during the *Qurun-e-Thalatha* (the period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ till the Tab'a Tab'a'een, i.e. approximately the first three hundred years of Islam), renowned for its goodness. If not, wouldn't these fall in the category of bidah (heretic innovations)?

### **Question 2**

Are the Book and the Sunnah not enough for one's salvation on the Day of Judgement? If yes, than why should one resort to Sufi practices of Zikr with the specified restrictions, even when he is following the Book and the Sunnah?

### **Question 3**

Does *Tasawwuf* form part of religion? If so, why did it not exist during the first three hundred years of Islam?

### **Question 4**

If Sufi knowledge is part of religion, why should its attainment depend on an accomplished Shaikh? Why can't it be achieved through the Book and the Sunnah alone?

### Question 5

The Sufi knowledge is said to be an esoteric science which can be learnt from living people. How amazing then is the claim by some Sufis that it can also be attained from the Ruh (spirit) of those in the grave, which is part of another world, particularly in the light of the fact that some outstanding theologians, including Imam Abu Hanifa, deny the phenomenon of hearing by the dead?

### Question 6

**ALLAH** described the creation of the human being, jinn and the Satan, in the Quran, without being asked, but did not disclose the reality of the Ruh even when asked. It clearly implies that the Ruh is more subtle than the angles or the jinn. How can any benefit be derived from such a subtle being, in the absence of all the pre requisites, like observation, communication and company of the Ruh? The claim of *Kharqa-e-Khilafat* (Robe of Permission) from a deceased saint will, therefore, seem totally absurd. Could you please quote any example?

### Question 7

Will the Ruh not taste death? The Quran asserts: 'Every soul will taste death'. How can an exception be made in case of Ruh?

### Question 8

Is there any reality of *Fana-fi-Rasool*, *Fana-fi ALLAH*, *Baqa-bi-ALLAH* and other meditations? How can these be achieved? Can you describe in detail so that we may also achieve these and enter the group of the selected slaves of **ALLAH**. We are living in a remote land. Considering me a member of your Order, please provide detailed guidance to acquire *kashf-e-malaeka* (seeing the angels) and *kashf-e-quboor* (seeing the condition of the dead inside the graves.)

## ANSWERS BY SHAIKH *ALLAH* YAR KHAN

### Answer to Question 1

Firstly, the meaning of bidah must be clearly understood. Any aspect of Shariah existing in the first three hundred years of Islam (*Qurun-e-Thalatha*) is Sunnah and anything outside its pale is bidah. The existence of any article of Shariah, according to the principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, depends upon the explanations of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, termed as Hadith, and not on any intellectual interpretations. Its validity will depend on its chain of transmission. The explanations may be explicit, implicit or inferred. Any of these types will prove the admissibility of the article and thus the article will be considered to have existed even if any of its details are not outwardly manifest. Thus, if any article is proved to be valid in entirety, it will be enforceable with all its details, even if a part thereof did not manifest itself during the first three hundred years of Islam. And if such a part of basic article unfolds itself ever after, it will be taken as Sunnah and not as bidah.

The various forms of explanations of Hadith include the saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his actions, his resolve and his intentions. However, Azkar is a Sunnah which is amply proved in the first three hundred years of Islam. The Sufi practices having their origin in the Book and the Sunnah, though the details have been derived therefrom by the Mashaikh (plural of Shaikh), subsequently will become part of Sunnah because the means and the methods are considered as extensions of the aims and objectives.

Secondly, it must be understood that *Ta'alluq-bi-ALLAH* (relationship with *ALLAH*), *Nisbat-bi-ALLAH* (connection with *ALLAH*) and *Tawajjuh-ila-ALLAH* (attention towards *ALLAH*) form part of *His* Commands, ordained as such, though in different dimensions. The lowest level is mandoob (appreciable) and highest is that of fardh (obligatory). There are hundreds of verses of the Quran and Ahadith (plural of Hadith) which prove that these have been ordained. In short, the essence of Shariah is that a human being's concern or relationship with his wealth and family should be of protection, and with *ALLAH* that of worship and obedience. Anyone who ponders over the Quran and the Ahadith can find hundreds of verses and explanations of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which clearly enjoin this concern or relationship and forbid an intimate concern with everything else.

Thirdly, it must be remembered that *ALLAH*'s Commandments and their contents are the real objective. All means, methods and resources employed for their accomplishment would also be taken as part of *His* Commands. Take the example of ablution for Salah. Although the real objective is the latter, yet it depends on the former. Now obtaining water for the ablution will become mandatory because it is the means to attain cleanliness. Similarly one requires covering certain parts of the body during Salah. Therefore, procurement of suitable dress as its means will also become mandatory. Likewise, all the means and methods adopted by the Mashaikh in connection with Zikr *ALLAH*, which is the real objective, will be regarded as its components and will not be

termed as *bidah*. These will not be taken as *Ihdath-fi-deen* (anything new in the deen) but as *Ihdath-li-deen* (something new for the deen). A medical practitioner may prescribe and change medicine according to the age of the patient and weather conditions because his real objective is to restore the health of his patient. Similarly, the real objective of Azkar (plural of Zikr) is *Ta'alluq-m'a-ALLAH* (concern or relationship with **ALLAH**) and *Tawajjuh-ila-ALLAH* (attention towards **ALLAH**). If this can be achieved by any method, the adoption of such a method shall also become mandatory.

Or for example, to uphold **ALLAH**'s Will and Purpose is an objective and Jihad (fighting for *His* cause as distinct from war) is one of the means towards this end. The procurement of modern weapons for Jihad - i.e., the tanks, guns, airplanes etc will become obligatory. Such an effort will not be considered a *bidah* on the plea that the use of swords and spear is a Sunnah and these weapons were not found in the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or the *Qurun-e-Thalatha*. It is quite clear that the real objective being Jihad, all the means acquired for this purpose will be mandatory and cannot be termed as *bidah*.

Fourthly, Ehsan has been described as part of Deen in *Hadith-e-Jibreel* and it is obligatory for Muslims to acquire Ehsan. Indeed it is not only a part of Deen, but its very essence and Deen remains imperfect without it. The reality of Ehsan has been explained by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in these words: "Worship **ALLAH** as if you see *Him* and if you do not, be sure that *He* sees you". The said *Hadith-e-Jibreel* described three components of Deen, that is, *Iman* which is the basis of the root, '*Amal* (actions) which is the tree, and *Ehsan* which is the *thamar* (fruit). If someone forsakes Ehsan, it will be like the Salah of a person who offers only two rakat in Maghreb (sunset) prayers. It is obvious that his prayer will not be valid. Similarly, leaving Ehsan will amount to abandoning a vital component of Deen, which shall render it imperfect.

Fifthly, it must be remembered that in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, a certain level of Ehsan was attained in his ﷺ blessed company by everyone, after fulfilling the basic religious obligations. This level was so high that even the greatest of the aulia cannot attain to the level of the junior most Companion. After the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the need for a deliberate effort (in the form of Sufi practices) was felt to acquire this important part of deen, which is actually its quintessence.

Now, as for twice a day Zikr assembly, the following quranic verses provide the authority:

- (1) It was *We* that made the hills declare, in unison with him, *Our* praises, at eventide and at break of day and the birds gathered. (38:18-19)

This reality is confirmed by true kashf. In the collective Zikr, Divine Lights acquired by the participants are reflected on each other which drive away evil effects, invigorate

the heart, and strengthen the resolve. As for the effects of Zikr, these can only be experienced and cannot be described in words.

- (2) And do you (O reader) bring your *Rabb* to remembrance in your very soul with humility and awe, without loudness in words, in the morning and evening, and be not of those who are heedless. (7: 205)

This verse ordains *Zikr-e Qalbi*, because awe is related to the heart and not the tongue. Further, the Zikr is ordained for both the morning and the evening. Anyone who does not do *Zikr-e-Qalbi* falls in the category of the forgetful or heedless. There cannot be a greater loss than being heedless about **ALLAH**, and the consequent imperfection of Deen hardly needs any elaboration.

- (3) Restrain yourself along with those who cry unto their *Rabb* at morn and evening. (18: 28)

Though frequent Zikr is enjoined under all circumstances, this verse emphasizes engagement in formal Zikr at two times every day.

Now here is a Hadith about collective Zikr:

- (4) There is no gathering engaged in **ALLAH**'s Zikr which is not surrounded by the angels and covered by **ALLAH**'s Mercy, peace and tranquility descend on it. It is such a blessed assembly that no participant is deprived of the barakah attending it.

This proves collective Zikr beyond any doubt. Its rewards, like patronization by the angels, **ALLAH**'s Mercy and peace of the heart are received by every participant. Yet another Hadith mentions the angels in search of Zikr assembly. Wherever they find one, they summon other angels also to avail the opportunity of attending it.

## **Answer to Question 2**

Frequent Zikr is not limited to any specific time and the fact that it is ordained for both the morning and the evening is proved from the Quran and the Sunnah, as discussed earlier. Zikr is an action in accordance with the Book and the Sunnah, why should then it be considered as a separate entity? *Hadith-e-Jibreel* highlights that besides beliefs (Iman) and actions (Islam), there is yet another obligatory part of religion which must be complied with, i.e. Ehsan. And it is this Ehsan which is termed as *Tasawwuf*. It is thus proved that a person cannot act fully on the Book and the Sunnah unless he engages himself in frequent Zikr in general, and performs Zikr regularly both in the morning and in the evening, in particular.

## **Answer to Question 3**

It is been explained in answer to the first question that *Tasawwuf* is part of deen.

#### Answer to Question 4

No knowledge or skill can be acquired without a teacher. Proper understanding of the Book and the Sunnah depends on a perfect and experienced teacher. Mere study of books cannot reveal or unfold the mysteries of the Book and the reality of the Prophet ﷺ's Sunnah. Why should *Tasawwuf* then be considered an exception and the need of a perfect master, who alone has the capability to teach this science, be denied? The books on *Tasawwuf* can show the path but cannot lead one to the goal. The conditions, experiences, states and the meditations for spiritual growth cannot be learnt through books because there are no words to describe them. These blessings are attained from the heart, the spirit and the inner self of an accomplished Shaikh. Anyone who has not experienced the Divine friendship and cognition cannot attain wilayah. And I must reiterate that only an accomplished Shaikh with a strong heart can attract the spirit and illuminate the inner self of a seeker.

#### Answer to Question 5, 6 and 7

There is a consensus amongst Ahl-e-Sunnah (the Sunnis) about deriving beneficence from the spirits of the aulia in barzakh. Any question on this score amounts to ignorance of their unanimous stand. The distance between the two worlds (this world and the barzakh), is a limitation for the physical body and not for the spirit. Please refer to the events of the Holy Prophet ﷺ's Night of Ascension. The Holy Prophet ﷺ frequently saw the people in barzakh, some of them in perfect peace. He also led the Salah of the Prophets ﷺ and talked to them while they were in barzakh and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in this world. There is difference of opinion amongst the experts of Hadith as to whether only the spirits of the Prophets ﷺ were present in *Masjid-e-Aqsa* (the dome of the rock mosque Jerusalem), or were they present along with their physical body. I personally favour the latter opinion. And mark the benefit derived from Prophet Musa ﷺ. The daily Salah was reduced from fifty to five times. This should dispel any doubts about deriving beneficence from the spirit.

The phenomenon of observation of the Ruh by a seeker, nature of its life, conversation with Ruh etc., cannot be described in words but can be taught and learnt. I consider *Tasawwuf* as an integral part of Deen, rather its very essence. Just as an acknowledgement of *His* bounties, I declare that if anyone wants to learn the Sublime Sufi Path, he is welcome to come to me. With a very few restriction that I would like to impose, Insha **ALLAH**, I shall show him how beneficence is derived from the spirit. He shall be able to converse with the spirits, shall see the rewards and retributions of the grave, and meet the spirits of the Prophets ﷺ, and I shall even put him through the spiritual oath of allegiance at the hands of the Holy Prophet ﷺ provided, of course, that he is a true follower of the Sunnah and is a sincere seeker.



The question of hearing by the dead would also be taken care of by personal observation. Though there is no dearth of direct evidence from the Book and the Sunnah, which only an ignorant and obdurate can deny. During the period of the Companions رضي الله عنهم, *kashf* and *ilham* (inner observations and inspirations) was attained without any deliberate effort because the mere company of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was enough for the purpose.

Human spirits draws life from Divine Lights. Just as the spirit is the driving force for the physical body, the Divine Lights which originate from the Almighty Being (as He is), are the driving force for the spirit. When the spirit leaves the physical body, it can no longer exert any influence on it. This separation is called death. The spirit is not mortal; it passes away in space but lives in time.

The reality of the quranic verse ‘All souls must taste death’ should also be clearly understood. As a rule, anyone who tastes survives and that which is tasted vanishes. Take the example of human being and his food. The former survives after tasting food while the latter is consumed and disappears. Similarly the spirits tastes death and survives.

The contention that Imam Abu Hanifa (founder of the Hanafi school of thought) did not believe in the hearing by the dead is totally incorrect. Attention is drawn to the following quotations:

- (1) It is a common public notion that Imam Abu Hanifa did not believe in the hearing by the dead. Mullah Ali Qari has written a booklet contradicting it. He concludes that such a reference to Imam Abu Hanifa is utterly baseless. (Urf-e-Shuzi: p. 386)
- (2) It is the consensus amongst Ahl-e-Sunnah that a person in barzakh is aware of the events of this world (Urf-e-Shuzi: p 387)
- (3) That a person is barzakh is aware of the events of this world is collective belief. And this awareness is impossible without life as listed in Urf-e-Shuzi page 387. (Sharah-e-Maqasad). The research scholars agree that Imam Abu Hanifa never denied hearing by the dead.
- (4) In short, the Quran and the Sunnah are full of instances which prove that those in barzakh have knowledge of the worldly events and the people. No one will deny it except the ignorant and the disbeliever. The Mashaikh assert that whosoever does not believe in it is indeed unaware of the reality of the Prophethood. (Lam‘at by Shaikh Abdul Haque Dehlvi vol. 111, p. 401).

To sum up, the spirit lives and retains, even after the conventional death, its achievements which it accomplished during its associations with the physical body. The knowledge that is acquired in this world can be received from it when it is in barzakh, provided that the seeker has the capability to establish communication with the spirit in barzakh, just as the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had benefited from Prophet Musa عليه السلام with regard to daily Salah.

## Answer to Question 8

*Fana-fi Rasul*, *Fana-fi ALLAH* and *Baqa-bi-ALLAH* are stages of the Path for which thousands of *ALLAH*'s slaves strived, but left this world with their unfulfilled ambition buried in their hearts. A sincere desire for these stages is the hallmark of goodness of a person. However, these cannot be achieved by hymning *His* praises verbally. They belong to the realm of the *Qalb* (subtle heart) and the *Ruh* (spirit). The oral Zikr alone cannot purify the soul and illuminate the inner self. The first step will, therefore, be reformation of the subtle heart which demands frequent *Zikr-e-Qalbi* closely adhering to the Shariah and the Sunnah under the guidance of an accomplished Shaikh.

Such a Shaikh first attends to the *lataif* and after their illumination, he leads the seekers to the Mediation *Ahadiyah*. When this connection strengthens he exerts his spiritual power to put him through Mediation of *Ma'iyat* and *Aqrabaiyat*. This is followed by the Three Circles of Love, Meditation *Ism-e-Zahir-wal-Batin*, a stroll of the *K'aba* together with *Sair-e-Salah* and *Sair-e-Quran*, Meditations onto the audience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his ﷺ mosque, where the meditations of *Fana-fi-Rasul* takes place. *Fana-fi Rasul* means complete absorption into the love and conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. After this the accomplished Shaikh puts the seeker to the Meditation of *Fana-fi-ALLAH* and *Baqa-bi-ALLAH*. These states cannot be achieved though oral Zikr but through Zikr of the heart and with the tawajjuh of an accomplished Shaikh. A strange feeling overtakes the seeker during *Fana-o-Baqa*. Physically he is on the ground but spiritually he feels himself prostrating before *ALLAH*, reciting Subahan Rabbi yal A'aala (Sublime is my *Rabb*). The sublime Arsh is the focal point of *His* Personal lights, which appear golden red. The whole universe resound with the same cry Subahana Rabbi Yal A'la by the trees, stones, animals and the angels. The seeker is completely absorbed and becomes unmindful of everything else. It is not strange that everything in this universe hymns *His* praises, Writes 'Allama Ibn-e-Taimiya:

*ALLAH* has created the stones, the minerals etc. that like human beings indeed hymn *His* praise.

Remember that the creation is of two kinds; the one blessed with intellect and the other without it. The former i.e. the human beings are created for *His* worship and adoration and the latter for hymning *His* praise, as ordained by *Him*.

There is a meditation in my Order whereby one can communicate with non-intelligent creations; i.e., the trees, stones, minerals etc. Their language is formally taught and a perfect Sufi can communicate with them. However, I purposely do not put seekers through it because it can mislead the novices.

Conversation with the Angels, Jinn, Satan and human *Ruh* are preliminaries of the Sublime Sufi Path. However, its proficiency varies with the ability of the students. There are some seekers who attain to very high stages of the Path like the Realm of Command, yet they do not have any spiritual observations. This is the Will of *ALLAH*, Who keeps *His* Own Secrets. There are others who are blessed with such observations at the very

outset. Such seekers are also put through the meditations of Ruyat-e-Ashkaal (lit: seeing the real shapes), whereby they observe the real form that the Ruh will assume after physical death. There are very few in today's materialistic world who carry their spirit in its original human form. The sinful life disfigures the human spirit into the shape of the animal who possesses predominant common character trait. I seek **ALLAH**'s refuge against such an eventuality. The scholars deny such phenomenon mainly due to lack of knowledge, though the scientific developments have proved it beyond any doubt. Take the example of the television. Despite great distances between the TV set and the transmitting station, you can clearly hear and view all the activities on the screen. Similarly, with spiritual insight, one can see and communicate with the human spirit inside the grave (regardless of its location on the globe).

The phenomenon that the solid bodies; the stones, the minerals etc, do possess consciousness is proved from the Quran the Sunnah:

- (1) The seven heavens and the earth, and all that is within praise *Him* and there is not a thing but hymns *His* praise but you understand not. (17:44)
- (2) Have you not seen that unto **ALLAH** pays adoration, whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the hills, and the trees, and the beasts, and many of mankind while there are many whom the doom is justly done. (22:18)



Some interpreters of the Quran have argued that *His* adoration is not actual prostration but it signifies that every creation is proof and sign of its Creator. This contention is however, not correct. The expression 'many of mankind' negates this argument and implies that there are some who do not do so. The adoration, therefore, is real.

- (3) Hadhrat Sahal رضي الله عنه narrates: The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that when a pilgrim recites Talbiyah "**ALLAH** humma labbaik' (O **ALLAH**! I am present), during the pilgrimage to Makkah, all the stone, trees and pebbles of earth around him, join him, till the chain extends from the East to the West. (Tirmizi and Ibn-e-Majah).

This Hadith confirms the spiritual observation of the men of cognition that the stones and the minerals etc. do possess consciousness through which they listen to the Talbiyah of a pilgrim and join in.

- (4) Hadhrat Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates: The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that when a person picks up pebbles from the K'abah, they implore him in the name **ALLAH** to let them remain there. (Abu Dawood.)

This Hadith also confirms the contention of the men of cognition that the pebbles do have consciousness and understanding.

- (5) Hadhrat Ans  narrates: The Holy Prophet  said that mount Uhad loves us and we love it. (Bukhari and Tirmizi).

The word love in this Hadith proves that stones do have consciousness and feeling. The mutual loves means real love. However, since this is a presumption proposition, it will not be considered as part of fundamental beliefs.

To sum up, the stones, minerals and the trees etc are created to hymn *His* praise and are fulfilling the purpose of their creations. But the human being created for *His* cognition is neglectful. Realizing of his responsibility, if a person strives to attain Divine Nearness and Pleasure, he would lead a comfortable and purposeful life both here and in the Hereafter. The only instrument to this attainment is frequent *Zikr ALLAH*.

I must reiterate that spiritual observation and communication with the spirits and the non intelligent creation do not constitute a certificate of perfection. The real perfection is *ALLAH*'s Nearness and Pleasure. It is, therefore, vital for a perfect Sufi to ignore these observation etc. and march on to the real destination which is *ALLAH*'s Nearness. And never forget that this objective can never be reached without the guidance of an accomplished Shaikh.